

*So that the things
that are supposed to live, can live*
Easter Day

Acts 10:34-43

•

1 Corinthians 15:19-26

•

Luke 24:1-12

We are told in today's reading from the Gospel of John that Mary came to the garden in the dark. The Garden is a metaphor that we encounter again and again in the scriptures.

In the story of creation, we hear of God planting a garden. Later in Genesis, the Promised Land is described as a land of milk and honey. That certainly would have sounded like a garden to the wandering nomads of the tribes of Abraham & Sarah, of Isaac & Rebekah, and of Jacob & Rachel. Jesus prayed with his disciples in a garden on the night when he was betrayed. Jesus was buried in a garden – in the tomb of a stranger. And it is to this garden that Mary went on the first day of the week. Mary went to the garden, looking for a tomb. A tomb holding a body. She was looking for something that was dead.

The Easter story that we hear today is taken from the gospel of John. Each Gospel has its own style, its own message, and its own way

of telling the gospel story. As John tells his story he is a master at making connections – at ‘connecting the dots’.

In the Beginning of John's Gospel, many people see strong echoes of one of the creation accounts told in Genesis. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him,* Those same echoes are heard in today's Easter story from John, at the end of that Gospel.

It was the first day of the week. Just like in Genesis.

Today's story begins in the dark. Just like in Genesis.

Today God encounters humanity in a garden. Just like in Genesis.

In the beginning of the Gospel of John we are told about John the Baptist – the one who ‘came before’ Jesus. The one who would prepare the way of the Lord.

Here at the end of John's Gospel we have Mary Magdalene.

Many people count Mary as the apostle to the apostles. In John's Gospel, she was the first person to see Jesus on Easter Day. She

was the first person who could say *I have seen the Lord*.

And more importantly, it was Mary who told the Apostles that Jesus was alive. Remember when Peter and the beloved disciple went into the tomb and found it empty, they ‘did not yet understand the scripture.’ It is Mary who delivers the message to the apostles that Jesus is actually alive. Mary came to the garden looking for a body. She came looking for something that was dead. And instead she found Jesus alive.

Several years ago during Holy Week, I had occasion to visit a family at MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston. I had been asked to come by and visit with Nancy & Bill. They still in the hospital following a platelet transfusion that Bill had needed. The doctors were checking everyday to see How the transfusion is doing. I was planning to take Holy Communion to Bill & Nancy either on Easter after church or the next day – depending on how he was feeling. So I gave them a call on that Saturday evening. It was already past sundown on Saturday, so it was really already Easter.

Bill answered the phone, and I asked the usual questions – How are you doing? How was your day? In the course of the conversation, Bill said the most amazing thing. It captured the essence of everything That the church tries to teach From Maundy Thursday Through Good Friday And on to Easter.

Bill was explaining to me how the platelet transfusion was supposed to work, and he said, *Yeah, we’re just sitting around Waiting for the things that supposed to die, to die. So that the things that are supposed to live, can live.*

Waiting for the things that are supposed to die, to die, So that the things that are supposed to live, can live. That’s what finally happened in the garden in John’s gospel. What was supposed to live, lived.

Perhaps the image of a garden, and an empty tomb helps you understand the resurrection – helps you understand how God can be alive in your soul and in your heart. If that’s so, then hang onto the image of that garden.

Maybe it works best for you to think about how it was a woman who first saw and understood the new creation that became real on Easter Day. If that helps you understand the resurrection, then hang onto the story of God speaking first to a woman.

Or it might be that Bill’s old platelets dieing so that new platelets can live is a metaphor that works for you. If that’s the case, then hang onto the idea of new life coming into being through death and resurrection.

Whatever metaphor, story, idea or image might work for you – Just remember the message on Easter Sunday: What is supposed to be alive, is alive. The one who is supposed to be alive, is alive. Alleluia. Christ is risen. The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.